



Morning Alert - Tuesday, April 11, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports that Japanese figure skater Mao Asada announced on her blog yesterday that she will retire from competition.

Top stories in national dailies included the deployment of the USS Carl Vinson strike group to the Western Pacific (Yomiuri); a government estimate that Japan's population will shrink to 88.08 million by 2065 (Asahi, Nikkei); the details of a GOJ bill on the Emperor's abdication (Mainichi); and the USG's notification to the GOJ of its plan to impose additional sanctions on Chinese firms involved in North Korea's nuclear weapons development (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Tillerson, Kishida agree to urge China to play bigger role in dealing with North Korea

Nikkei and Yomiuri front-paged reports on a meeting between Secretary of State Tillerson and Foreign Minister Kishida on the sidelines of the G7 foreign ministers' meeting in Italy on Monday. The papers wrote that the two officials agreed to urge China to play a bigger role in halting Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development. According to a Japanese briefing, Secretary Tillerson told FM Kishida that the U.S.'s commitment to defending its allies remains unwavering and briefed him on discussions at the recent summit meeting with China. Kishida welcomed Washington's stance of putting all options on the table with regard to North Korea and reiterated Japan's support for America's resolve to fulfill its obligation to prevent the use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

Tensions rising over North Korea as U.S. mobilizes strike group

All papers reported extensively on the deployment of the USS Carl Vinson strike group to waters near the Korean Peninsula, saying that tensions between the U.S. and North Korea are rising. According to a ROK military source, the fleet will probably arrive in the area on April 25. The papers speculated the move is aimed at sending a warning to North Korea and pressing China to exercise its influence over Pyongyang. Yomiuri conjectured that President Trump decided to send the strike group to waters near the Korean Peninsula because his meeting with Chinese President Xi failed to produce a ratcheting up of pressure on Pyongyang. The paper added, however, that while welcoming the U.S. pressure on the DPRK, Tokyo and Seoul are worried about the possibility of U.S. military action provoking the Kim Jong Un regime. Nikkei wrote that attention will be focused on whether China will apply further pressure on Pyongyang following its summit meeting with the U.S.

In a related development, Asahi wrote that arrangements are being made for the chief negotiators to the Six-Party Talks from the U.S., Japan, and South Korea to meet in Tokyo in late April to discuss specific collaborative measures to respond to North Korea.

Japanese ambassador meets with ROK vice foreign minister

Most papers wrote that Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Nagamine held talks with South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Lim on Monday. The ambassador told reporters after the meeting that the two diplomats discussed the need for cooperation between their nations on Syria and North Korea. Asahi speculated that Nagamine did not disclose to the media whether they had discussed the comfort women issue out of concern for the South Korean public's negative reaction to Japan's handling of the issue.

SDF troops to start withdrawing from South Sudan next week

Asahi wrote that the Ministry of Defense announced on Monday that 70 of the 350-member GSDF engineering unit currently participating in the UN peacekeeping operations in South Sudan will arrive in Japan on April 19 as the first group to return home after the GSDF's five-year deployment in the nation.

ECONOMY

Toyota announces \$1.33 billion investment in Kentucky plant

Nikkei front-paged a report on an announcement on Monday by Toyota Motor Corp. that it will invest \$1.33 billion to retool its main U.S. plant in Kentucky as part of a plan to invest \$10 billion in the U.S. over the next five years. Noting that Toyota's announcement included a statement by President Trump welcoming the company's decision to make additional investments in the U.S., the paper speculated that the move may help reduce the Trump administration's pressure on the automaker. In the statement, the President said that "Toyota's decision to invest \$1.3 billion in their Kentucky plant is further evidence that manufacturers are now confident that the economic climate has greatly

improved under my administration.” This marks the first time for the President to acknowledge Toyota’s investment in the U.S. Other papers ran similar inside-page stories.

POLITICS

Nagashima’s departure to undermine leadership of Democratic Party

Most papers wrote that the leadership of the Democratic Party (DP) under President Renho will be tested in the face of former Senior Vice Defense Minister Akihisa Nagashima’s submission of a letter of resignation from the party on Monday and Vice President Goshi Hosono’s announcement of recommendations for constitutional revision that differ from the party line. Nagashima decided to leave the DP in protest of the current party leadership’s increasing election cooperation with the Japanese Communist Party. Nagashima has not yet disclosed whether he plans to join another political party in the future, but Yomiuri speculated that other DP members who share Nagashima’s views may follow in his footsteps.

